

Long-awaited shortcut

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Opening Tuesday, Dover's Puncheon Run connector is welcome sight for commuters

By **Ken Grant**

Staff writer

DOVER — Thousands of drivers can start shaving time off their commutes through the capital city this week.

On Tuesday, Secretary of Transportation Anne P. Canby, Gov. Thomas R. Carper, Dover Mayor James Hutchison and other local officials will cut a ribbon and open the Puncheon Run connector, linking Del. 1, U.S. 13 and U.S. 113.

The project was started in October 1998, and is named after the Puncheon Branch of the St. Jones River.

Before construction started, the project led to an interesting discovery.

"The archeology studies discovered some Native American finds," said D. Michael Williams, spokesman for the Delaware Department of Transportation.

Along the banks of the St. Jones River, archeologists found more than 50,000 artifacts — including pottery, stone tools, cooking implements and the remains of homes — dating from 1,000 to 5,000 years ago.

Mr. Williams said Native American leaders came to the site and conducted an Indian cleansing ceremony.

The new road is 2.6 miles long and cost \$26.7 million.

It includes four bridges — over State Street, the St. Jones River, U.S. 13 and Del. 1.

"It's a pretty scenic view," Mr. Williams said.

He said DelDOT estimates about 16,500 vehicles will travel the road daily at first, and that number is expected to rise to about 18,000 by 2005.

"The hopes are it will take the non-local traffic off of (Del.) 10," he said.

Until now, commuters traveling between the major north-south highways in the south Dover area have had to either use Del. 10 or drive to the U.S. 13-113 split.

While building the road, construction crews created large pits near the exit ramps.



Staff photo/Linda Laird

The much-anticipated Puncheon Run connector, joining Del. 1, U.S. 13 and U.S. 113 in Dover, will open Tuesday. Construction on the \$26.7 million road began in October 1998 and is expected to be used by about 16,500 people daily.

Mr. Williams said those will become wetland mitigation sites, helping to keep the project within EPA regulations.

Businesses catering to daily commuters in the area are taking a wait-and-see attitude about how the new road might impact them.

"I don't think it's going to impact us that much," said Gina Lanigan, manager of the Goose Creek Food Store on Del. 10 near Dover Air Force Base.

"We get a few travelers (but) our customers are mostly from the air base."

Art Byrnes manages the Shore Stop on U.S. 13.

"All I know is that it's opening soon," he said.

"Hopefully, it will impact business here, but we'll just have to wait and see."

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